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**STATEMENT ON 2005 NATION'S REPORT CARD™ RESULTS
IN READING AND MATHEMATICS**

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Several months ago, when we reported that elementary students' math and reading results were at an all time high, we suggested that some caution was appropriate. The data we reported then were from a long-term trend analysis, which by design involves a framework established many years ago that is administered to a relatively small national sample of children. At the time we felt that it was important to see if the 2005 large sample, fifty-state assessment produced similar results.

Indeed, the 2005 Nation's Report Card does show results that are similar to those released last July.

Fourth grade mathematics scores are higher than previous assessments, and the proportion of students who perform at or above the *Basic* level continues to increase. Gains on these assessments are especially strong for Black and Hispanic students.

Fourth grade reading scores also are as high or higher than those reported in the past, although the reading gains are not as strong as those reported for math. Reading scores for similar time periods show reasonably parallel increases between the fourth grade assessment and the long-term trend results for 9-year-olds. Again, Black and Hispanic students scored higher in 2005 than in any previous year.

(more)

And though still large, the differences in average scores between those students classified as eligible and not eligible for subsidized school lunches continue to shrink.

Elementary student performance is stronger in some school systems than others and, as the results we are releasing today demonstrate, some states are performing better than others. However, we need to remember that state accountability structures range from mature to brand new. Even so, it would seem that we are on an elementary school improvement path across the country. Elementary students, teachers and parents should be pleased with recent successes.

Just as with long-term trend results for 13-year-olds, middle school results are mixed. The 2005 Report Card reflects consistent improvement in eighth grade mathematics and, in recent years, generally flat scores on the reading assessment.

Repeating concerns I expressed during the summer, more empirical research on middle and high school student reading performance is needed. As a country, we need to know whether there is a fundamental weakness in instruction, lack of success in overcoming influences beyond the control of the school systems, or merely insufficient lapsed time for students with better pre-school and early grade preparation to reach eighth grade. NAEP results cannot answer the question, "Is it poor instruction, lack of preparation, or a combination of both?"

We look forward to revisiting the performance of older students in some detail when a report of 12th grade achievement data is released next year.

As more and more people are interested in NAEP data, the Governing Board has been working with the National Center for Education Statistics to make Nation's Report Card results as user friendly as possible. We are anxious for local educators, and certainly the general public, to find the information about student performance useful and understandable. I encourage you to visit www.nationsreportcard.gov for more information.